

# THE TRANSATLANTIC ESSAY CONTEST AND THE PLANNING PRINCIPLES OF THE NORTH AFRICAN CAMPAIGN

A Monograph

by

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## ABSTRACT

THE TRANSATLANTIC ESSAY CONTEST AND THE PLANNING PRINCIPLES OF THE NORTH AFRICAN CAMPAIGN, by LTC John A. Atilano II, 44 pages.

The North African campaign of World War Two began with Operation TORCH on November 8, 1942. The campaign required the coordination of air, ground, and naval forces in time, space, and purpose to ensure a near simultaneous amphibious assault on multiple objectives from two ports of debarkation and separated by three-thousand miles of enemy infested ocean. Making matters more complex, military professionals from the two nations involved, and their respective services, had diverging opinions on the conduct of the campaign.

The six weeks of deliberations known as the “transatlantic essay contest” demonstrated the cognitive tensions between the two allies and their respective services regarding the operational objectives for the North African campaign. Achieving the ultimate objective of the campaign was a balancing act between selecting operational objectives within the operational reach of the forces available while mitigating undesired effects. Each nation and service proposed different methods for balancing the conflicting views in order to achieve the strategic objectives set forth in the August 13, 1942 directive to the Allied Expeditionary Force Commander in Chief. In the end it took the President of the United States and the Prime Minister of the United Kingdom to break the impasse and provide the resources necessary to provide the mission a reasonable chance of success. Although the North African campaign was fought seventy years ago, the planning principles that drove the development of the North African campaign are just as relevant today as they were in 1942.

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This monograph is the product of months of reading, research, writing, and re-writing. The time invested was all too often at the expense of time spent with my family. I could not have completed this paper without the love and support of my wife, Daniella, who acted as a sounding board, took care of our home and our children while I toiled away at the library, and supported me every step of the way. I must also thank my children John, Joseph, and Gianna. This monograph was colloquially known in our home as “the paper” and my boys consistently asked when I would be done with my “paper” as I left the house on Sunday mornings to spend half of my weekend at the library. Their patience and understanding is on par with Gandhi’s.

This monograph would not have been possible without the help of Dr. Stephen Bourque, my monograph director. My intent for choosing a historical topic was to improve my knowledge of history. I wanted to challenge myself by selecting a topic I knew nothing about (a decision I would often regret during the summer and fall of 2012). Dr. Bourque’s patience and guidance was invaluable. I would also like to thank Colonel Andy Shoffner, my seminar leader for his support and guidance throughout the process.

I would like to thank the library staffers who were instrumental to my research. My thanks to John Dubuisson at the Combined Arms Research Library for his tireless work in locating CCS 94. The staff at the Eisenhower Presidential Library was extremely helpful with teaching me to how to conduct research and whose patience with my questions helped me in attaining the necessary primary source documents for this monograph.

Finally, I would like to thank my mother, Rosalie Atilano, for her love and support throughout my life. I also want to thank the veterans of my family: my grandfather, Miguel Atilano (WWII); my father, Sergeant Major (Retired) John Atilano (Vietnam); and my uncles, Fred and Charlie Atilano (Vietnam). As the first commissioned officer of my family, I clearly stood on the shoulders of giants to get where I am today.

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## INTRODUCTION

Thus the transatlantic essay contest seems to be drawing to a peaceful conclusion, with the master minds on both sides of the Atlantic having put forth their best efforts to arrive at a sound and strong plan of attack within the limitations of the available resources of the two great countries.

– Captain Harry C. Butcher  
*My Three Years with Eisenhower*  
September 3, 1942

“Forget about our equipment and just save your life!” bellowed a major as wave after wave of German infantry and tanks overran the Nineteenth Engineer Regiment’s command post in the afternoon of February 20, 1943.<sup>1</sup> Five German artillery battalions laid siege to the allied defenses and wreaked havoc on the unprepared American troops. Colonel A.T.W. Moore, commander of the Nineteenth Engineer Regiment, reported that his unit “no longer existed” when in fact he had only lost 128 of his 1200 men.<sup>2</sup> Swarms of enemy infantry flooded the hills on either side of the pass. Adding insult to injury was a new German weapon, the *Nebelwerfer*, colloquially known as the “screaming meemies” because it sounded like “a lot of women sobbing their hearts out.”<sup>3</sup> The *Nebelwerfer* was a six-barreled multiple rocket launcher that simultaneously fired six eighty-pound projectiles upon its target bringing fear and death to the allied defenders.<sup>4</sup> Retreating soldiers not captured by the Germans were robbed of their clothes and weapons by Arab marauders. With the German assault at the doorstep of the Kasserine Pass,

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<sup>1</sup>Rick Atkinson, *An Army at Dawn, the War in North Africa, 1942-1943* (New York: Henry Holt & Co., 2002), 372.

<sup>2</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>3</sup>*Ibid.*, 371.

<sup>4</sup>Orr Kelly, *Meeting the Fox: The Allied Invasion of Africa, From Operation Torch to Kasserine Pass to Victory in Tunisia* (New York: J. Wiley, 2002), 237.



artillery batteries were forced to spike their guns and retreat.<sup>5</sup> As Colonel Theodore J. Conway moved forward to better grasp the situation, he was nearly trampled by retreating soldiers.

Colonel Alexander Stark, commander of Task Force Stark (a hodge-podge of units tasked with defending the Kasserine Pass), began his retreat with two photographers who had come to the front for “some action shots” after enemy grenades began detonating around his command post. Stark would later report that he “had to crawl because [German soldiers] were not more than fifteen yards away.” Kasserine Pass was lost.<sup>6</sup>

The Allies fought the Germans in the battle of Kasserine Pass, in central Tunisia, from February 19-22, 1943. Field Marshall Erwin Rommel, Commander of the Panzerarmee Afrika, planned to seize the city of Le Kef, attacking along two axes (Thala to the north and Tebessa to the west).<sup>7</sup> On the morning of February 19, 1943, *Kampfgruppe Deutsches Afrika Korps* attacked north from Thelepte through the Kasserine Pass, but lack of air support for the Axis forces stalled the attack.<sup>8</sup> On February 20, Tenth Panzer, on the German right flank, attacked north towards Thala while Kampfgruppe Deutsches Afrika Korps, on the German left flank, attacked northwest towards Tebessa. Artillery concentration during this attack was extremely high due to two large units attacking through a pass roughly a mile wide. By noon on February 20, the command post of the Nineteenth Engineer Regiment defending the bulk of Kasserine Pass was overrun. By the

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<sup>5</sup>Steve Zaloga and Michaël Welply, *Kasserine Pass 1943: Rommel's Last Victory* (Oxford: Osprey Publishing, 2005), 60.

<sup>6</sup>Atkinson, *An Army at Dawn*, 369-371.

<sup>7</sup>Kelly, *Meeting the Fox*, 237.

<sup>8</sup>George F Howe, *Northwest Africa: Seizing the Initiative in the West*, U.S. Army in World War II Mediterranean Theater of Operations (Washington, DC: Office of the Chief of Military History, Department of the Army, March 15, 1957), 449.

evening of February 20, Rommel possessed the northwestern exits to Kasserine pass.<sup>9</sup> During the night of February 20, 1943, the Germans awaited an Allied counterattack that never came. Instead, the Allies reinforced their eastern defenses in the vicinity south of Thala and along the western high ground of the Hatab River in the west.<sup>10</sup> The next day, Rommel attacked again but met significant resistance by the United States First Infantry Division and elements of the United States First Armored Division forcing the Germans to retire under a barrage of artillery and tank fire on February 22.<sup>11</sup> German intelligence incorrectly indicated that significant reinforcements were arriving and that an Allied counterattack was again imminent. The counterattack never came and by the morning of February 23, enough reinforcements had arrived to solidify the Allied defense. Rommel's forces, low on fuel and ammunition, were forced to retire through the Kasserine Pass.<sup>12</sup> It was a defeat for Allied forces, but would not detrimentally affect the campaign that began four months earlier.<sup>13</sup>

The Battle of Kasserine Pass was the tipping point in the North African campaign and would be Rommel's last tactical victory of the war. Having been routed at the second battle of El Alamein by General Bernard Montgomery's British Eighth Army, Rommel's Afrika Korps had retreated two thousand miles west from Libya into Tunisia. The British Eighth Army captured

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<sup>9</sup>Kelly, *Meeting the Fox*, 237.

<sup>10</sup>Ibid., 239.

<sup>11</sup>Zaloga and Welply, *Kasserine Pass 1943: Rommel's Last Victory*, 63.

<sup>12</sup>Howe, *Northwest Africa: Seizing the Initiative in the West*, 469.

<sup>13</sup>For a full description of the battle see Martin Blumenson, "Kasserine Pass, 30 January-22 February 1943," in *America's First Battles, 1776-1965*, ed. Charles E Heller and William A Stofft (Lawrence, Kan.: University Press of Kansas, 1986) and Zaloga and Welply, *Kasserine Pass 1943: Rommel's Last Victory*.

Tripoli, the main Axis supply area, on January 23, 1943.<sup>14</sup> The Germans were caught in the “pincers” originally conceived by the British for the North African Campaign. The campaign’s objective was the “complete control of the Mediterranean from the Atlantic Ocean to the Red Sea.”<sup>15</sup> The first phase secured landing sites in French North Africa, the second phase included the unchallenged control of Morocco, Algeria, and Tunisia.<sup>16</sup> On November 8, 1942, the North African Campaign began with Operation TORCH. Over five hundred warships, troop transports, and supply ships delivered over one hundred thousand British and American troops to the beaches of Casablanca, Oran, and Algiers. The assault launched from the United States and Great Britain and took nearly three months to plan and coordinate. TORCH was no ordinary operation. It was the largest amphibious invasion force ever assembled and included ships, troops, and aircraft from two different countries and was planned by the first combined-joint staff in history.<sup>17</sup> After minor battles during the landings and the capitulation of French forces to the Allies, the second phase of the operation began in earnest. With Tripoli captured, the Axis now relied on the port of Tunis for resupply.<sup>18</sup> Tunis was decisive terrain during the campaign. No longer considered an Italian venture, German Chancellor Adolf Hitler now feared a possible collapse of Italy and attack on Germany from the south. Hitler was forced to divert massive resources from the eastern

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<sup>14</sup>Gerhard L Weinberg, *A World at Arms: A Global History of World War II* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 361.

<sup>15</sup>Combined Chiefs of Staff, "Directive for Commander-in-Chief Allied Expeditionary Force" (Included as Enclosure A of CCS 103/1, 27 August 1942. Found in "Commander In Chief Operation Torch, Part 1", August 13, 1942), 1.

<sup>16</sup>Howe, *Northwest Africa: Seizing the Initiative in the West*, 16.

<sup>17</sup>Michael R Matheny, *Carrying the War to the Enemy: American Operational Art to 1945* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2011), 165.

<sup>18</sup>Eric Niderost, "Baptism of Fire: Kasserine Pass, 1943," *Military History Online* <http://www.militaryhistoryonline.com/wwii/articles/kasserinepass.aspx#> (accessed December 26, 2012).

theater to Tunisia where a second army would be built to counter the allied invasion and prevent the allies from using North Africa as a launch point for threatening Europe.<sup>19</sup> In order to prevent the Allies from capturing Tunis, the Axis would seize the town of Le Kef and envelop the Allies from the rear. The Allies established a defense in western Algeria along the grand dorsal in order to protect their lines of communication. Kasserine was located in the grand dorsal and provided one of the entry points into the rear of allied supply areas. Protecting the supply lines was critical for the Allies to capture Tunis. When Rommel's thrust to capture Le Kef failed, his forces were critically low on food, ammunition, and fuel. General Albert Kesserling ordered Rommel to withdraw from Kasserine and prepare to receive an attack by the British Eighth Army coming from the east. Within three months the Axis would be forced off the African continent. Eisenhower's plan achieved victory and set up later invasions in Sicily, Italy, and France. The long and arduous process that lead to a victory parade in Tunis on May 20, 1943 began eighteen months earlier on December 7, 1941.<sup>20</sup>

With the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor, and Germany's declaration of war the next day, the United States was now in the world war. President Franklin D. Roosevelt and his principal leaders (Secretary of War, Harry Stimson; Army Chief of Staff, General George C. Marshall; and Chief of Operations Division, Major General Dwight D. Eisenhower) had to develop a strategic approach to the conflict. They had to address the war on two strategic directions against two different enemies: the Japanese in the Pacific, and the Germans in the Atlantic. In the Atlantic, against Germany, Roosevelt and Marshall found themselves lashed to the United Kingdom and its determined Prime Minister, Winston S. Churchill. Two weeks after the attack, Churchill was in Washington to discuss strategic plans for America's entrance into the

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<sup>19</sup>Weinberg, *A World at Arms: A Global History of World War II*, 435.

<sup>20</sup>Atkinson, *An Army at Dawn*, 387.

war (the Arcadia Conference). Roosevelt and Churchill (along with their war planners) agreed that a “Germany-first” strategy was appropriate.<sup>21</sup> Additionally, the two allies agreed that a Combined Chiefs of Staff would be located in Washington and the war ran from there. As part of this strategy, Churchill proposed that the United States join with British forces in Operation GYMNAST, a British invasion of North Africa. Churchill had 55,000 troops ready to board landing craft. The operation could begin as soon as the United States could get its troops across the Atlantic.<sup>22</sup> American military planners were not fond of the combined operation, now called Operation SUPER-GYMNAST. American war planners believed SUPER-GYMNAST squandered American resources in a peripheral theater. The consensus between Chief of Staff George C. Marshall and his team was that a direct attack towards Berlin was the quickest and most efficient way to secure victory. Chief of Operations Division, Major General Dwight D. Eisenhower, produced an aggressive plan for America’s entrance into World War Two. The campaign consisted of three operations. Operation BOLERO was the initial build-up of forces in the United Kingdom. Operation ROUNDUP, a direct invasion of France in April 1943, would follow BOLERO. A branch plan, Operation SLEDGEHAMMER, had allied forces invading northwestern France in late 1942, should the opportunity present itself. Marshall personally briefed Churchill on this plan. Churchill agreed to the plan but made his reservations known.<sup>23</sup> Concurrent with that broad agreement, Major General Eisenhower was promoted to Lieutenant

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<sup>21</sup>Maurice Matloff and Edwin M Snell, *Strategic Planning for Coalition Warfare, 1941-1942* (Washington, D.C.: Center of Military History, U.S. Army, 1953), 99.

<sup>22</sup>*Ibid.*, 102-103.

<sup>23</sup>Norman Gelb, *Desperate Venture: The Story of Operation Torch, the Allied Invasion of North Africa* (New York: W. Morrow, 1992), 52-54.

General and assigned as the commander for United States Army forces in the European Theater of Operations.<sup>24</sup>

In June of 1942, Churchill returned to Washington to persuade Roosevelt that SLEDGEHAMMER was not feasible.<sup>25</sup> The Germans were too strong and there was little chance of success. Churchill again recommended SUPER-GYMNAST. The British and the Russians needed a second front opened by the end of 1942. This was imperative. If a second front were not opened the Russians would be forced to negotiate a settlement with the Germans. If this occurred, the Germans would move the 284 divisions on the eastern front to the west leaving the British practically alone to face the German onslaught.<sup>26</sup> By July of 1942, as preparation for BOLERO progressed, the Americans were frustrated by a slow-moving United Kingdom. As a result, Marshall and Eisenhower recommended to Roosevelt that American forces cease work on BOLERO and ROUNDUP and immediately begin preparing for a campaign in the Pacific theater.<sup>27</sup> Roosevelt asked to see a detailed plan that same afternoon. Marshall and his planners were unable to produce a plan. Roosevelt therefore charged Marshall with working with the British to decide where the United States could enter the war by the end of 1942.<sup>28</sup> On July 24, 1942, the Combined Chiefs of Staff approved Combined Chiefs of Staff Memorandum 94 (CCS 94), "Operations in 1942/43," which cancelled SLEDGEHAMMER and directed the immediate development of plans for the North Africa campaign.<sup>29</sup> With SLEDGEHAMMER cancelled, the

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<sup>24</sup>Matloff and Snell, *Strategic Planning for Coalition Warfare, 1941-1942*, 196.

<sup>25</sup>Ibid., 236.

<sup>26</sup>Gelb, *Desperate Venture*, 89-92.

<sup>27</sup>Matloff and Snell, *Strategic Planning for Coalition Warfare, 1941-1942*, 267-268.

<sup>28</sup>Ibid., 266-286.

<sup>29</sup>Combined Chiefs of Staff, "CCS 94 Operations in 1942/43," (London: The National

Americans and British decided that North Africa was America's best entry point into World War Two. Operation SUPER-GYMNAST was renamed to Operation TORCH with a deadline of October 30, 1942 (one-week prior to the United States mid-term elections).<sup>30</sup> The invasion force would join up with the British campaign currently in progress. Roosevelt and Chief of Staff George C. Marshall appointed Lieutenant General Dwight Eisenhower as the commander of the Allied Forces invading North Africa from the west. With that decision, American planners began shifting planning and war resources from BOLERO to TORCH.<sup>31</sup>

The journey from Roosevelt's decision in July to the invasion of North Africa in November 1942 until the Battle of Kasserine Pass was long. It was set in motion by a planning staff under the designated commander, Lieutenant General Dwight D. Eisenhower, working in London and a second staff in Washington under the direction of General George C. Marshall, United States Army Chief of Staff. Together, they had to solve many problems such as the location of landing sites, rules of engagement for Vichy-French resistance, the source of shipping and air support assets, amphibious assault training, how to balance competing priorities in two different theaters (Pacific and Atlantic), and how to ensure a near simultaneous amphibious assault on multiple objectives from two ports of debarkation, separated by three thousand miles of enemy infested ocean.<sup>32</sup> Making matters more complex, military professionals from two nations and several services had diverging opinions on how the campaign should be executed. There was

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Archives), July 24, 1942, CAB 88/6.

<sup>30</sup>Ibid., 284.

<sup>31</sup>David M Kennedy, *Freedom From Fear: The American People in Depression and War, 1929-1945* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), 580-581.

<sup>32</sup>Ray S Cline, *Washington Command Post: The Operations Division* (Washington: Office of the Chief of Military History, Dept. of the Army, 1951), 180.

no multinational doctrine for combined-joint staff operations in 1942.<sup>33</sup> In fact, the doctrinal terms “joint” and “combined” were born out of the agreement from the Arcadia conference.<sup>34</sup> The North African campaign required the coordination of air, ground, and naval forces in time, space, and purpose to achieve the military objective of “complete control of North Africa, from the Atlantic to the Red Sea.”<sup>35</sup> What principles guided their development of the operational plan?

Working in London and Washington, Generals Marshall and Eisenhower, along with their planners, worked through the details of the plan. Most had only marginal experience with large unit operations. Marshall and Eisenhower were Leavenworth graduates. Marshall, having been an instructor there, had often advocated for studying large unit operations.<sup>36</sup> At Leavenworth, Eisenhower studied the principles of large unit operations (division and corps). The summer of 1942 saw the United States simultaneously plan and execute two expeditionary operations, at opposite ends of the planet. In the Pacific, naval and marine forces followed the American victory at Midway, landing at Guadalcanal in the Solomon Islands to stop the Japanese

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<sup>33</sup>Multinational doctrine is defined as “Fundamental principles that guide the employment of forces of two or more nations in coordinated action toward a common objective. It is ratified by participating nations.” U.S. Joint Chiefs of Staff, *JP 1-02 Department of Defense Dictionary of Military and Associated Terms* (Washington, DC: U.S. Joint Chiefs of Staff, August 15, 2012), 210.

<sup>34</sup>Memorandum by Combined Chiefs of Staff (ABC-4), January 14, 1942 stated “To avoid confusion we suggest that hereafter the word “Joint” be applied to Inter-Service collaboration of ONE NATION, and the word “Combined” to collaboration between two or more of the UNITED NATIONS.” Combined Chiefs of Staff, *Proceedings of the American - British Joint Chiefs of Staff Conferences Held in Washington D.C., on Twelve Occasions Between December 24, 1941 and January 14, 1942* (Washington, D.C.: Office of the Combined Chiefs of Staff, 1942), 264.

<sup>35</sup>Dwight D. Eisenhower, “Commander-In-Chief’s Dispatch, North African Campaign” (1943), 1.

<sup>36</sup>Peter J. Schifferle, *America’s School for War: Fort Leavenworth, Officer Education, and Victory in World War II* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2010), 83-85.



advance. While in Washington and London, American and British planners crafted their operational approach to join up with the British Eighth Army and defeat the Axis forces in northwest Africa. The discourse during the summer of 1942 began what Captain Harry Butcher, Naval Aide to General Eisenhower, would later call the “transatlantic essay contest.”<sup>37</sup> As American and British planners worked through the details, three principles of the elements of operational design emerged that guided their efforts: objectives, avoiding undesired effects, and the problems of operational reach.<sup>38</sup>

## OBJECTIVES

Soviet Foreign Minister Vaycheslav Molotov arrived in London on May 20, 1942 with news that the Germans had overrun the Crimean peninsula in the Ukraine. The common joke shared in the British capital was that Molotov spoke only four words of English: yes, no, and “second front.”<sup>39</sup> Molotov came to London to discuss when the British would open a second front in Europe. British Prime Minister Winston Churchill quickly quashed Molotov’s hopes of a second front being opened in 1942. Churchill believed that the American plan for a cross-channel attack in 1943 was premature; unfortunately he had not, as of yet, told the Americans this opinion.<sup>40</sup> Molotov was rightfully discouraged and proceeded to Washington to discuss the

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<sup>37</sup>Harry C. Butcher, *My Three Years with Eisenhower: The Personal Diary of Captain Harry C. Butcher, USNR, Naval Aide to General Eisenhower, 1942 to 1945* (New York, N.Y.: Simon and Schuster, 1946), 85.

<sup>38</sup>The elements of operational design include: Termination, Military End State, Objectives, Effects (including Undesired Effects), Center of Gravity, Decisive Points, Lines of Operation and Lines of Effort, Direct and Indirect Approach, Anticipation, Operational Reach, Culmination, Arranging Operations, and Forces and Functions. U.S. Joint Chiefs of Staff, *JP 5-0 Joint Operation Planning* (Washington, DC: U.S. Joint Chiefs of Staff, August 11, 2011), III-18.

<sup>39</sup>Kennedy, *Freedom From Fear*, 575.

<sup>40</sup>*Ibid.*

situation with President of the United States Franklin Roosevelt. In Washington, Molotov demanded a straight answer from the American president. Roosevelt told Molotov “inform Mr. Stalin that we expect the formation of a second front this year.”<sup>41</sup> In order to do this, the United States would need to reduce Lend-Lease shipments to Russia to sixty percent of current deliveries. Although Molotov was concerned with the reduction, Russia was willing to accept the reductions with the guarantee that a second front would be opened in 1942. Two days later a joint Russian-American statement was published declaring “full understanding was reached with regard to the urgent tasks of creating a Second Front in Europe in 1942.”<sup>42</sup> After the meeting, Roosevelt sent a telegram to Churchill stating “I have a very strong feeling that the Russian position is precarious and may grow steadily worse during the coming weeks. Therefore, I am more than ever anxious that BOLERO proceed to definite action beginning in 1942.”<sup>43</sup> Churchill left immediately for Washington to persuade Roosevelt not to keep his promise to the Russians and convince the president for a campaign in North Africa by the end of 1942. One month later, on July 22, 1942, the Allies agreed that a North Africa invasion would be the best and quickest way to get the United States into the war against Germany. Roosevelt needed to get the United States into the war quickly; preferably before the mid-term congressional elections in November. Roosevelt also wanted to adhere to the Germany-first strategy because he believed that defeating Germany led to the defeat of Japan, but not the opposite. However, the American Joint Chiefs of

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<sup>41</sup>Robert E. Sherwood, *Roosevelt and Hopkins: An Intimate History* (New York: Harper, 1948), 563.

<sup>42</sup>*Ibid.*, 577.

<sup>43</sup>Although Roosevelt states BOLERO, he actually means ROUNDUP; the troop build-up in the UK (BOLERO) was already underway. Sherwood makes note of this before the cited message quoted in his book. *Ibid.*, 569.

Staff were not happy with Roosevelt's decision.<sup>44</sup> The disagreement over strategic objectives would not be the last point of contention between the two allies. With the President's decision to invade North Africa, the issue of operational objectives would lead to an intense argument during the summer of 1942.

The selection of operational objectives was one of the planning principles that guided the development of the North African campaign. After North Africa was chosen as the theater strategic objective, the selection of operational objectives became a major point of contention during the planning of the North African Campaign.<sup>45</sup> British and American planners presented diametrically opposed objectives for the North African campaign. The Americans preferred to secure ground lines of communication from the Atlantic coast of North Africa before attacking east towards Tunisia. From the American perspective, this would mitigate the risk of Vichy-France, Spain, or Germany closing the Strait of Gibraltar. The British preferred a direct approach, proposing to quickly seize Tunisia before the Germans could send reinforcements to secure the Afrika Korps' rear flank. Planners in Washington originally planned for all landings to be along the Atlantic coast of French Morocco. The British approach was the opposite of the Americans'. Churchill and his planners proposed striking as deep into the Mediterranean as possible and seizing Tunisia (in conjunction with an attack to the west by the British Eighth Army) before the Germans could reinforce the embattled location.<sup>46</sup> Thus, deciding where to

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<sup>44</sup>Kennedy, *Freedom From Fear*, 578-579.

<sup>45</sup>The strategic objective of the war was the unconditional surrender of the Axis powers. The theater strategic objective in the Mediterranean was complete control of the Mediterranean from the Atlantic to the Red Sea. To achieve the theater strategic objective the Allies would have to control Tunisia. For doctrinal definitions and a sketch of how strategic, theater strategic, and operational objectives nest with each other see U.S. Joint Chiefs of Staff, *JP 5-0 Joint Operation Planning*, III-21.

<sup>46</sup>Kent Roberts Greenfield, *Command Decisions* (Washington, D.C.: Office of the Chief of Military History Dept. of the Army, 1960), 188-189.

conduct the amphibious landings was a professional discussion about selecting operational objectives.

Selecting operational objectives for the North African campaign was important because the objectives would not only affect the operational approach of the campaign (direct or indirect), but also influence the level of operational risk acceptable to the two nations. Joint Publication 5-0, *Joint Operation Planning*, defines an objective as “a clearly defined, decisive, and attainable goal toward which every military operation should be directed.”<sup>47</sup> This is not to be confused with the theater strategic military end state of the campaign, which was “complete control of North Africa from the Atlantic to the Red Sea.”<sup>48</sup> In order to achieve control over North Africa, the Allies had to end all resistance to allied forces on the continent. The initial objectives, the landing sites, would form the foundation of Eisenhower’s operational approach. In 1941, Field Manual 100-5 (*Field Service Regulations*) was not as precise or cogent in defining “objective.” However, it is clear that an objective was “physical” and had certain characteristics.

451. The purpose of offensive action is the destruction of the hostile armed forces. To facilitate the accomplishment of this purpose the commander selects a *physical objective* such as a body of troops, dominating terrain, a center of lines of communication, or other vital area in the hostile rear for his attack. The attainment of this objective is the basis of his own and all subordinate plans. This objective should have the following characteristics:

- a. Its capture must be possible within the time and space limits imposed by the assigned mission.
- b. Its capture should assure the destruction of the enemy in his position, or the threat of its capture should compel the enemy to evacuate his position.
- c. It should produce a convergence of effort.
- d. It must be easily identified.

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<sup>47</sup>U.S. Joint Chiefs of Staff, *JP 5-0 Joint Operation Planning*, III-20.

<sup>48</sup>Eisenhower, "Commander-In-Chief's Dispatch, North African Campaign," 1.

e. Its capture should facilitate contemplated future operations.<sup>49</sup>

Most interesting about the debate over TORCH's objectives was each nation's focus on a different physical location. Concerned about the closure of the Strait of Gibraltar, the Americans preferred to seize Casablanca with a large force ensuring secure lines of communication regardless of the situation in the strait. The British were most concerned with Tunis. Securing Tunis prevented the Axis from reinforcing Rommel. The British opted for as large a force as possible and as far east as possible at the expense of Casablanca because of the difficulties associated with landing on the west coast of Africa and the limited forces available for the campaign.

The first example of objectives guiding the development of the North African campaign began when Eisenhower submitted his first outline plan for TORCH on August 9, 1942 and included four initial objectives: Casablanca, Oran, Algiers, and Bône. The "immediate object" was

a combined land, sea, and air assault, approximately simultaneous, against the Mediterranean coast of Algeria and the west coast of French Morocco, with a view to the earliest possible occupation of Tunisia, and the establishment in French Morocco of a striking force which can ensure control of the Straits of Gibraltar, by moving rapidly, if necessary, into Spanish Morocco.<sup>50</sup>

Eisenhower believed that the closure of the Strait of Gibraltar posed significant operational risk to allied lines of communication during TORCH. To mitigate that risk, American planners wanted to seize the ports and railways near Casablanca and secure the southern portion of the Strait of Gibraltar before attacking towards Tunisia. The cost of this approach was that the Americans

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<sup>49</sup>War Department, *FM 100-5 Field Service Regulations* (Washington, DC: United States Government Printing Office, May 22, 1941), 97.

<sup>50</sup>Dwight David Eisenhower and Alfred D. Chandler, *The Papers of Dwight David Eisenhower: The War Years I* (Baltimore; London: the Johns Hopkins Press, 1970), 455.

estimated it would take approximately three months to complete this phase of the operation.<sup>51</sup>

That was unacceptable to the planners in London. From the British perspective, the operation was a race to Tunisia. The British believed that penetrating deep into the Mediterranean and attacking east towards Tunisia while the British Eighth Army attacked from the West would crush German resistance in a “pincer” attack. For the British, time was the most important factor. By striking quickly, the element of surprise would be an advantage to exploit. During the assault, German air power would be focused on the eastern front against the Soviets. Additionally, destroying German resistance quickly before reinforcements could be brought over from Sicily was critical to the success of the campaign. If the Allies waited, the Germans would have a distinct advantage because of their shorter lines of communication.<sup>52</sup> A large amphibious force posing a credible threat to the French in Algeria could prevent resistance at all other landing sites and would enable the rapid seizure of Tunisia. Additionally, Algeria held the bulk of French governmental administration. Ten percent of the population were either native French citizens or naturalized citizens. The French military and a Governor General directly governed the southern provinces.<sup>53</sup> The British also believed that by taking Tunisia, Casablanca would “automatically fall.”<sup>54</sup> However, there were disadvantages to Casablanca that had to be considered. The tides on the Atlantic coast made amphibious landings extremely difficult four out of every five days. The terrain at Casablanca was an advantage to the defender especially if the tides were not

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<sup>51</sup>Richard M. Leighton and Robert W. Coakley, *Global Logistics and Strategy, 1940-1943* (Washington, D.C.: Center of Military History, U.S. Army, 1995), 417.

<sup>52</sup>Ibid., 418.

<sup>53</sup>Howe, *Northwest Africa: Seizing the Initiative in the West*, 16.

<sup>54</sup>Leighton and Coakley, *Global Logistics and Strategy, 1940-1943*, 419.

cooperative to an amphibious landing.<sup>55</sup> On August 9, 1942, Eisenhower sent a letter to Marshall explaining how he derived the plan. From Eisenhower's perspective he was trying to balance "the best possible compromise between desirable execution of operations on the one hand and definitely limited resources on the other."<sup>56</sup> The British convinced Eisenhower on the soundness of their reasoning. Taking into account planners' concerns in Washington and London, a second version of the TORCH outline plan was submitted to the Combined Chiefs of Staff on August 25, 1942.<sup>57</sup>

The August 25 version of the plan is the second example of objectives guiding the development of the North African campaign. The revised objective of operation TORCH was

[a] combined land, sea, and air assault against the Mediterranean Coast of ALGERIA, with a view to the earliest possible occupation of TUNISIA, and the establishment in FRENCH MOROCCO of a striking force which can insure control of the STRAITS of GIBRALTAR, by moving rapidly, if necessary, into SPANISH MOROCCO.<sup>58</sup>

The obvious difference from the August 9 plan was that TORCH no longer called for any landings on the west coast of Africa near Casablanca. Unfortunately, the August 25 plan was dead on arrival. Eisenhower included a letter to the Combined Chiefs of Staff along with the new version of the plan informing the Combined Chiefs that the operation, as planned, did not have enough forces due to the piecemealed efforts by the Combined Chiefs to economize TORCH. Eisenhower clearly laid the blame for the plan's poor chances of success at the feet of the Combined Chiefs.

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<sup>55</sup>Ibid.

<sup>56</sup>Eisenhower and Chandler, *The Papers of Dwight David Eisenhower: The War Years I*, 453.

<sup>57</sup>Matloff and Snell, *Strategic Planning for Coalition Warfare, 1941-1942*, 288.

<sup>58</sup>Commander in Chief Operation Torch, "Outline Plan - Operation Torch" (Included as Enclosure B of CCS 103. Found in "Commander In Chief Operation Torch, Part 1", August 21, 1942), 4.

In this connection the apparent inability of the Combined Navies to provide escorts for an attack at Casablanca along with those planned inside the Mediterranean has distinctly decreased the opportunity for creating throughout North Africa the impression of overwhelming attack, so essential to producing a readiness to accept allied occupation without material resistance.<sup>59</sup>

Eisenhower's recommendation to provide for a reasonable chance of success was for the Combined Chiefs to provide not only the forces outlined in the August 25th plan but an additional force comprised of ground, air, and naval forces to seize Casablanca simultaneously with the assaults on Oran and Algiers. The American Joint Chiefs recommended approval for the August 25 plan but due to the lack of resources, recommended changing the ultimate objective of the campaign to the "Establishment of mutually supporting lodgments in the Agidir-Marrakech-Casablanca-Rabat-Fez area in French Morocco and in the Oran-Mostaganem-Mascara area in Algeria."<sup>60</sup> In effect, the American Joint Chiefs wanted to secure Algeria and conduct an air campaign within the Mediterranean due to the lack of combat power required for the complete control of North Africa. The British Joint Chiefs responded in kind. Their first point was that securing Morocco would be slow and would enable the Germans to take Tunisia long before the Allies could get there. Once the Germans held Tunisia, the Allies would never achieve the "new" ultimate objective. Secondly, the British Joint Chiefs re-asserted their claims that the tidal conditions on the west coast of Africa would prevent assault landings four out of every five days, and risking half the force on such an excursion and if assault landings proved impossible, the entire operation would have to be aborted. The British Joint Chiefs further asserted that no changes should be made to the original (August 13, 1942) directive given to Eisenhower because

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<sup>59</sup>Dwight D. Eisenhower, "Letter Eisenhower to Combined Chiefs of Staff" (Included as Enclosure C of CCS 103. Found in "Commander In Chief Operation Torch, Part 1", August 23, 1942), 34.

<sup>60</sup>U.S. Joint Chiefs of Staff, "Proposed New Directive for Commander-in-Chief Allied Expeditionary Force" (Included as Enclosure B of CCS 103/1, 27 August 1942. Found in "Commander In Chief Operation Torch, Part 1", August 25, 1942).



any changes to it would have significant second and third order effects that would cause increased delays to the execution of any operation. Such delays had to be “avoided, like the plague.”<sup>61</sup>

The British Joint Chiefs outlined their broad views for TORCH. First, Algiers must be the first objective because it was the “seat of administration,” provided the best port in North Africa, and had the predominance of people who might be sympathetic to the Allies. Secondly, Oran must be taken to prevent its occupation by the enemy and enabling him to sever the Allied sea line of communication. Third, reaching Tunis within “four to five weeks” of the landing was imperative to the overall success of the campaign. Tunis was decisive terrain and therefore the British were willing to accept significant risk in the short-term in order to secure Tunis. The British did not discount the value of Casablanca; they agreed with the American Joint Chiefs that the advantages of securing Casablanca for Allied use were “self evident.” However, the British did not believe that securing Casablanca should be done at the expense of the other objectives. Based on these arguments, the British presented a choice to the American Joint Chiefs: either the United States provide the shipping required for an overwhelming assault force to secure Casablanca simultaneously with Oran and Algiers or seize Casablanca after the Oran and Algiers operations using the naval assets from the previous operations.<sup>62</sup>

The impasse between the American and British Joint Chiefs of Staff required intervention by Roosevelt and Churchill. Several compromises were made between the two leaders in order to provide the overwhelming force required to give the operation a reasonable chance of achieving its ultimate objective of complete control of North Africa from the Atlantic to the Red Sea.<sup>63</sup> The

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<sup>61</sup>British Joint Chiefs of Staff, "Telegram from British Chiefs of Staff to U.S. Chiefs of Staff" (Included as Enclosure C of CCS 103/1, 27 August 1942. Found in "Commander In Chief Operation Torch, Part 1", August 27, 1942), 1.

<sup>62</sup>Ibid., 1-2.

<sup>63</sup>Howe, *Northwest Africa: Seizing the Initiative in the West*, 28.

final plan directed simultaneous landings at Casablanca, Oran, and Algiers. The Western Task Force would be completely American (including the naval assets) and would consist of five regimental combat teams, and two armored regiments.<sup>64</sup> The Center Task force would consist of three regimental combat teams, one armored division, and one ranger battalion; all American units coming from the United Kingdom and assaulting from British naval assets.<sup>65</sup> The Eastern Task Force would consist of one American regimental combat team coming from the United Kingdom, one regimental combat team coming from the United States, two British brigade groups, and two composite commando units comprised of both American and British forces. All naval support for the Eastern Task Force would come from the United Kingdom.<sup>66</sup>

The debate between the Americans and the British over the operational objectives of TORCH focused at the extremes. Algiers was a key objective because it was the center of Vichy-French administration; in essence it was the de facto capital.<sup>67</sup> In Algiers the allies would find the requisite leaders to negotiate surrender. Oran was the other non-controversial operational objective. It was an unoccupied port that had to be captured if only to prevent the enemy from using it to threaten the allied sea line of communication through the Mediterranean. The tension was at the periphery of North Africa: Casablanca in the West and Bône-Bizzerte-Tunis in the east. Both nations agreed that a large assault force was required to demonstrate resolve and convince the French to acquiesce. However, different assumptions and the acceptance of risk based on those assumptions caused conflict between the two allies. The British believed that

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<sup>64</sup>Commander in Chief Operation Torch, "Outline Plan - Operation Torch" (Included as CCS 103/3 September 26, 1942. Found in "Commander In Chief Operation Torch, Part 1", September 20, 1942), 2.

<sup>65</sup>Ibid.

<sup>66</sup>Ibid.

<sup>67</sup>Howe, *Northwest Africa: Seizing the Initiative in the West*, 16.

capturing Tunis quickly achieved two operational goals simultaneously. The first goal being that with the Allies holding Tunis, the Germans could not use it to send reinforcements and resupply Rommel. The second goal, the British believed, was that capturing Tunis would automatically give the Allies Casablanca because the French would see that resistance was futile. The Americans disagreed with these assumptions. The Americans believed that a force must be sent to capture Casablanca in order to force French acquiescence and present a formidable threat against Spanish Morocco preventing them from closing the Strait of Gibraltar. Should the Spanish close the strait, the assault forces inside the Mediterranean could still be resupplied over land through French-Morocco. In the end, compromises from both nations were required in order to provide enough forces to make a credible threat and mitigate the risk of undesired effects in response to the initial invasion.

#### AVOIDING UNDESIRE EFFECTS

From May 27 to June 4, 1940, over 338,000 British and French soldiers avoided German annihilation and escaped from the continent of Europe during Operation DYNAMO.<sup>68</sup> On the morning of June 4, 1940, Churchill gave his famous “We Shall Fight on the Beaches” speech to the House of Commons. During that speech, Churchill stated “The British Empire and the French Republic, linked together in their cause and in their need, will defend to the death their native soil, aiding each other like good comrades to the utmost of their strength.”<sup>69</sup> Twenty-nine days later, friendly Anglo-Franco relations would cease to exist. On June 25, 1940, France officially surrendered to Germany. Under the terms of the armistice, the French Navy would be

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<sup>68</sup>Walter Lord, *The Miracle of Dunkirk* (New York: Viking Press, 1982), ix.

<sup>69</sup>Winston Churchill, “We Shall Fight on the Beaches”  
<http://www.winstonchurchill.org/learn/speeches/speeches-of-winston-churchill/128-we-shall-fight-on-the-beaches> (accessed December 4, 2012).

demilitarized in ports not occupied by Germany. Churchill did not trust that the French Navy would be demilitarized and was extremely concerned the French warships would be used by the Axis to prevent Britain from entering the Mediterranean.<sup>70</sup> On July 3, 1940 British “Force H,” commanded by Vice Admiral Sir James Somerville, arrived from Gibraltar at Mers-el-Kébir, near Oran in Algeria as part of Operation CATAPULT. Somerville presented French Admiral Marcel-Bruno Gensoul with an ultimatum: “join the British, sail under escort to internment in a British port, sail under escort for demilitarization in the Caribbean, or scuttle his ships.”<sup>71</sup> Gensoul tried to negotiate but Somerville was under orders to settle the issue by nightfall. When no solution could be reached, Somerville reluctantly attacked. At the end of the battle the British sank one French battleship, heavily damaged two additional French warships, and killed 1,297 Frenchmen. Simultaneously, the British seized nearly sixty French warships that were safely docked in other British ports. The British executed a similar attack on French warships in Dakar on July 7, 1940.<sup>72</sup> The attacks shocked France and had serious political and operational implications for the North African campaign two years later.

Avoiding undesired effects was the second planning principle guiding the development of the North African campaign. Specifically, there was disagreement in the second and third order effects of invading North Africa. American and British planners made different assumptions about how the Vichy-French, Spanish, and Germans would react to the invasion. The example of Mers-el-Kébir provides context to the underlying Franco-Anglo trust issues and the assumptions to prevent undesired effects made by the United States and Great Britain regarding reactions to

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<sup>70</sup>Paul H. Collier, *The Second World War. 4, the Mediterranean, 1940-1945* (Oxford: Osprey, 2003), 26.

<sup>71</sup>*Ibid.*, 27.

<sup>72</sup>*Ibid.*

the invasion of North Africa. After France officially surrendered to Germany, the British feared that the Germans would use the French Navy to further the German war effort. If the French Navy joined with the Axis, the Mediterranean would be lost. This fear led to Operation CATAPULT. The French saw the attack at Mers-el-Kébir as “a brutal act of aggression” because they did not intend to break the armistice. The French did not understand why their ally of three weeks prior would attack a friend that was now neutral and had promised that the French Navy would be used solely under the strictest interpretation of the armistice agreement signed on June 25, 1940.<sup>73</sup> This example demonstrates how every action can create desired and undesired effects. It is the planner’s duty to think through the possible undesired effects created by an operation and mitigate them as much as possible.

Considering the second and third order effects created by an operation is crucial in planning. While planners consider the desired effects created by an operation, it is also important to consider the undesired effects of the operation as well. Joint Publication 5-0, *Joint Operation Planning*, defines an effect as a “physical and/or behavioral state of a system that results from an action, a set of actions, or another effect” and further illustrates an undesired effect as “a condition that can inhibit progress toward an objective.”<sup>74</sup> United States Army doctrine of 1942 did not address effects like the doctrine of 2013. *Field Service Regulation 100-5* discussed “Security in the Offensive” highlighting that “success or failure of an offensive is dependent in a large measure upon the action taken to protect the command from hostile reaction.”<sup>75</sup> An offensive action is certain to illicit a hostile reaction and that hostile reaction can create an

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<sup>73</sup>Brett C. Bowles, ““La Tragédie De Mers-el-Kébir” and the Politics of Filmed News in France, 1940–1944,” *The Journal of Modern History* 76, no. 2 (2004), 348.

<sup>74</sup>U.S. Joint Chiefs of Staff, *JP 5-0 Joint Operation Planning*, III-20.

<sup>75</sup>War Department, *FM 100-5 Field Service Regulations*, 135.

undesired effect. During the planning of the North African campaign, American planners were most concerned with strong resistance from Vichy-French and Spanish forces closing the Strait of Gibraltar. The undesired effects created by the hostile reaction were assumed to be significant Allied losses, the loss of the only line of communication to the assault forces inside the Mediterranean, and perhaps the complete failure of the campaign.<sup>76</sup> Concerns about the Strait of Gibraltar were based on the “Security in the Offensivse” doctrine of *Field Service Regulation 100-5*. The Strait of Gibraltar was a natural choke point in the allied sea line of communication. If the Vichy-French, Spanish, or Germans closed the strait, the operation would fail. The British were most concerned with German reinforcement of the Afrika Korps through Tunis. The British believed the operation was a race to Tunis, which had to be seized within four to five weeks of the landings if the campaign was to be successful.<sup>77</sup> Three potential scenarios provided the basis for the Anglo-American disagreement over undesired effects.

Vichy-French resistance was the first scenario of an undesired effect considered by the planners of the North African campaign. In his August 23, 1943 letter to Marshall, Eisenhower argued that significant French resistance in North Africa would delay the allied seizure of “Tunisia ahead of Axis troops which could then be built up more rapidly than our own.”<sup>78</sup> In Eisenhower’s estimation the plan relied too heavily on the assumption that the Vichy-French would put up a token gesture of resistance before switching sides. Eisenhower argued that assuming quick French assistance was invalid. The Germans held significant leverage over the Vichy-French in North Africa. Specifically, the Germans could “exert tremendous pressure on the friends, family, and interests” located in France to compel French inhabitants in North Africa

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<sup>76</sup>Eisenhower, "Letter Eisenhower to Combined Chiefs of Staff," 34-35.

<sup>77</sup>Greenfield, *Command Decisions*, 188-189.

<sup>78</sup>Eisenhower, "Letter Eisenhower to Combined Chiefs of Staff," 34.

to resist an Allied invasion. Secondly, as soon as the French flipped sides, all French military assets in Europe would be seized by the Germans and used against the allies.<sup>79</sup> Eisenhower understood that regardless of where the landings would take place, the French had to capitulate before the allies could begin thinking about Tunisia. Eisenhower was concerned that the success of TORCH was based on political calculation and assumptions instead professional military calculus. The Vichy-French had nearly 60,000 troops along the coast and border of Spanish Morocco as well as forces stationed inland near Marrakech, Meknès, and Fès. French naval forces included naval defense guns around Casablanca and Dakar, while French warships and submarines in the area posed a significant threat to an amphibious invasion. French air forces included nearly 170 aircraft with a majority being fighters and long-range bombers.<sup>80</sup> The French forces in Oran consisted of 16,500 infantry soldiers, fifty-one coastal defense guns, and nearly one hundred fighters and bombers stationed on runways at the periphery of the city.<sup>81</sup> French forces in Algiers totaled 33,000 troops, ninety fighters and bombers, and minimal naval forces.<sup>82</sup> Eisenhower's dilemma was preventing significant resistance from one hundred thousand Frenchman and then convincing those same Frenchman to join with the Allies against the Axis. Each of these forces posed a significant threat to the rear of any allied force attacking inside the Mediterranean. If the Allies had to fight through the French in order to get to Tunis, it could not be done in four to five weeks. By then the Germans would have reinforced Rommel and the fight for North Africa would be much longer than anticipated. In Eisenhower's mind the best way to prevent such an undesired effect was presenting the French with an overwhelming

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<sup>79</sup>Ibid., 35.

<sup>80</sup>Howe, *Northwest Africa: Seizing the Initiative in the West*, 40.

<sup>81</sup>Ibid., 48.

<sup>82</sup>Ibid., 52.

strike force. However, with the limited forces available another approach would be required to prevent strong French resistance in North Africa. The solution is known as the “Clark-Darlan deal.”<sup>83</sup> In essence, the deal turned Clausewitz’s axiom of military means serving a political purpose on its head by using political means to serve a military purpose.<sup>84</sup> The political deal with Darlan signed on November 22, 1942, led to Vichy-French acquiescence to the Allied invasion and enabled the Allies to focus on achieving the theater strategic objective of removing Axis forces from the continent of North Africa.

The closure of the Strait of Gibraltar was the second undesired effect considered by the planners of the North African campaign. Spain held the land north and south of the strait of Gibraltar and could close the strait and attack the British port and airfield at Gibraltar. Eisenhower believed that assuming the Spanish would remain neutral was a gamble. The Spanish posed a catastrophic threat to the success of the operation and potentially the entire war. Should the Spanish forsake neutrality, they could easily place the Allied lines of communication in jeopardy by closing the Strait of Gibraltar. Secondly, and more importantly, if the Spanish attacked the air and naval base at Gibraltar any chance of success during the campaign, and perhaps the war, would be lost.<sup>85</sup> Finally, Eisenhower correctly pointed out the possible German reaction should Spain and France not resist. Eisenhower argued that the Germans could potentially invade Spain, attack through the Iberian Peninsula and effectively close the Strait of Gibraltar and seize the British port and airfield.<sup>86</sup> This would have the same effect as if the

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<sup>83</sup> For a detailed account of the negotiations that led to the Clark-Darlan deal see Arthur L. Funk, "Negotiating the 'Deal with Darlan'," *Journal of Contemporary History* 8, no. 2 (1973).

<sup>84</sup> Carl von Clausewitz, *On War*, ed. Peter Paret and Michael Howard (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1984).

<sup>85</sup> Eisenhower, "Letter Eisenhower to Combined Chiefs of Staff," 34-35.

<sup>86</sup> *Ibid.*, 36.



Spanish resisted. In a letter to Roosevelt dated January 9, 1942, Marshall understood there were 150,000 Spanish troops in Tangier. Spanish Morocco was also vulnerable to air attack from bases on the Iberian Peninsula and North Africa. In Marshall's view the best option for invading North Africa was an invitation by the French to occupy French Morocco along with Spanish assurances that they would not assist the Axis in opposing the Allied occupation of French Morocco.<sup>87</sup> Should Spain forsake neutrality and close the Strait of Gibraltar during TORCH, severing the Allied lines of communication, the operation would fail. Thus, a simultaneous landing at Casablanca would provide another way to support the assault forces at Oran and Algiers. However, the British were more concerned about seizing Tunis as quickly as possible. From the British perspective, there was a greater risk of the Germans reinforcing Rommel through Tunis than there was of the French closing the Strait of Gibraltar.<sup>88</sup> Marshall and his planners in Washington clearly followed the doctrine of the time. One of the elements of their doctrine was "to endanger the enemy's lines of communication and routes of retreat in case of defeat."<sup>89</sup> Closing the Strait of Gibraltar was a strategy that the Spanish could employ to devastating affect of the North African campaign. This was a reasonable assumption given that the purpose of seizing Tunis was to employ that same strategy against Rommel's Afrika Korps in Tunisia. Spain was in a precarious situation. Although traditionally considered neutral in historical records, Spain teetered between non-belligerency in support of the Axis and neutrality

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<sup>87</sup>George C. Marshall, Larry I. Bland and Sharon R. Ritenour, *The Papers of George Catlett Marshall. Vol. 3. "The Right Man for the Job", December 7, 1941-May 31, 1943* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University, 1991), 50-51.

<sup>88</sup>Matheny, *Carrying the War to the Enemy: American Operational Art to 1945*, 169.

<sup>89</sup>Command and General Staff School, *The Principles of Strategy for An Independent Corps or Army in a Theater of Operations* (Fort Leavenworth, KS: Command and General Staff School Press, 1935), 7.

throughout World War Two.<sup>90</sup> The reality was that the Spanish were in no condition to wage war independently. According to Spanish Foreign Minister Serrano Suñer:

The truth of the matter is that after the Civil War we did not have the economic strength and the weapons to enter the war independently - that is to say, voluntarily and with dignity. If we had accepted Hitler's invitation to join the war, it would have been tantamount to accepting an invasion of German troops because we were in no condition to wage war. It was not easy, however. As Foreign Minister I had to toe a narrow line. We could not be so neutral as to arouse Hitler's suspicion, nor could we be so blatantly pro-German as to invite an Allied invasion.<sup>91</sup>

Thus, the Spanish assisted the Axis logistically while stalling against Hitler's attempts to compel Spain to enter the war and close the Strait.<sup>92</sup> German economic and industrial assistance enabled the Nationalists to prevail in the Spanish Civil War. These ties remained during World War Two, however food and military minerals were exported at such levels that the Spanish people suffered famine and resource shortfalls during the war.<sup>93</sup> Further complicating matters, the Allies used several economic and political interventions to hinder Spain's economy and prevent her from entering the war.<sup>94</sup> What the Allies did not know was that once Hitler launched Operation BARBAROSSA (the invasion of Russia in June 1941), German pressure to convince the Spanish to close the Strait of Gibraltar ceased.<sup>95</sup> More than anything else, Spain was most concerned about defending its own territory. With the German defeat at El Alamein by the British and the Soviets holding the Germans at bay on the eastern front, an Axis victory was no longer a forgone

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<sup>90</sup>David Winegate Pike, "Franco and the Axis Stigma," *Journal of Contemporary History* 17, no. 3 (1982), 372-373.

<sup>91</sup>*Ibid.*, 377.

<sup>92</sup>Antonio Marquina, "The Spanish Neutrality During the Second World War," *The American University International Law Review* 14, no. 1 (1999), 171.

<sup>93</sup>*Ibid.*, 177-180.

<sup>94</sup>*Ibid.*, 173-175.

<sup>95</sup>William B. Breuer, *Operation Torch: The Allied Gamble to Invade North Africa* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1985), 109.

conclusion. Hence, the Spanish would not close the Strait and would gradually move from a policy of non-belligerency to neutrality.<sup>96</sup>

The German seizure of Tunis and reinforcement of the Afrika Korps was the third undesired effect considered by the planners of the North African campaign. Any competent military officer could look at a map of the Mediterranean and immediately understand that Tunis was decisive terrain for the North African campaign.<sup>97</sup> In the fall of 1942, Rommel's exploits were legendary. He was feared and respected by the Allies for his victories in France, and Tobruk.<sup>98</sup> The British Eighth Army was holding at El Alamein in preparation for the eventual British victory that would send Rommel retreating away from the Eighth Army and towards Tunis.<sup>99</sup> The operational problem was getting the Eastern Task force from Algiers to Tunis (five hundred miles) before the Germans could fly in troops and equipment from Sicily and Sardinia (two hundred miles) to establish a credible defense (see figure 1). Tunis presented an opportunity. During the planning of the North African campaign, Rommel received logistics support out of Tripoli, Libya.<sup>100</sup> There was no large German force in Tunis. However, Allied planners on both sides of the Atlantic knew that the success of the campaign hinged on controlling Tunisia and keeping it for Allied use while simultaneously denying its use to the Axis. Once the invasion began and Axis spies reported allied movements, the race to Tunisia would begin in earnest.

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<sup>96</sup>Weinberg, *A World at Arms: A Global History of World War II*, 432.

<sup>97</sup>Kelly, *Meeting the Fox*, 88.

<sup>98</sup>*Ibid.*, 84-85.

<sup>99</sup>Weinberg, *A World at Arms: A Global History of World War II*, 431.

<sup>100</sup>Mark A. Machin, "Rommel, Operational Art and the Battle of El Alamien" (United States Naval War College, Newport, RI, May 16, 1994), 6.

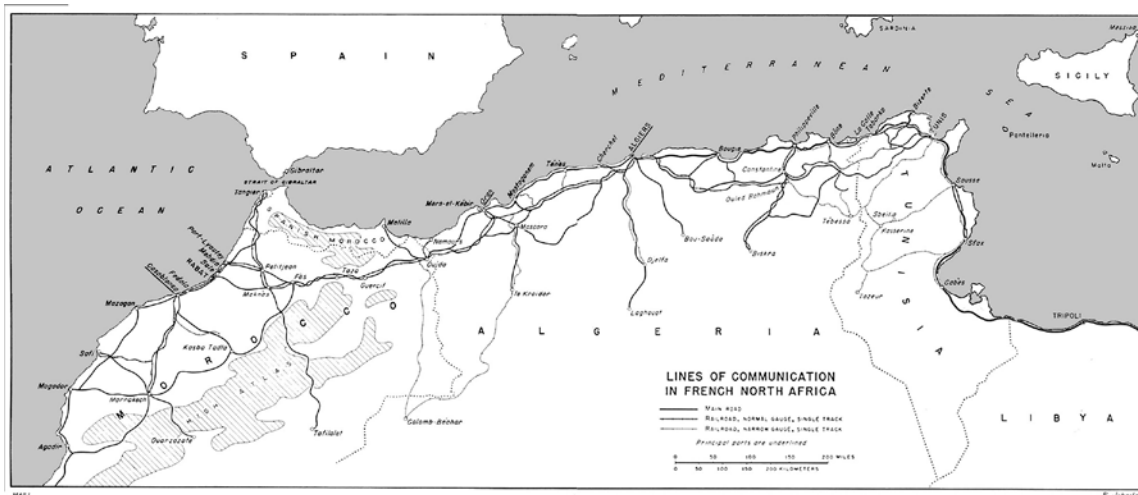


Figure 1: Lines of Communication in French North Africa

Source: Howe, *Northwest Africa: Seizing the Initiative in the West, 18-19*.

British planners were most concerned with Germany's reaction to the amphibious landings and hence argued for landings as far east as possible. In a telegram from the British Chiefs of Staff to the United States Chiefs of Staff, the British argued for landings as far east as Bône and Phillpeville.<sup>101</sup>

Preventing undesired effects drove the planning of the North African campaign and illuminated stark differences of opinion between American and British planners regarding assumptions about enemy reactions and level of acceptable risk. The British, having felt the full force of the German offensive in Europe and North Africa, were rightly concerned with any German reaction and the resultant undesired effects. The Americans, following their doctrine and desiring to get troops into the fight as soon as possible, were much less tolerant to risking what little forces they had built up in a peripheral theater merely to protect British colonial interests. In

<sup>101</sup>British Joint Chiefs of Staff, "Proposed New Directive for CINC AEF," 2.

the end it required Roosevelt and Churchill to compromise and agree to landings at Casablanca and Algiers. Casablanca would mitigate the risk of a Spanish attempt to close the Strait of Gibraltar while Algiers would place Allied forces as far east as possible in order to enable an assault on Tunis within weeks of the landing. Allocating forces to those landing sites would highlight the problems of operational reach for the planners of the North African campaign.

### OPERATIONAL REACH

In August of 1942 operational requirements for troops, aircraft, landing craft, shipping, and other war-making material were in high demand for the Allies. In the Pacific, the Solomon Islands campaign began with the assault on Guadalcanal and the Australians arrived in Port Moseby. On the Eastern front, the Germans were extremely close to capturing Stalingrad. In Europe, the Canadians launched their failed raid at Dieppe and the United States Eighth Air Force launched its first attack in Europe. In Libya, Rommel's forces began their attack at El Alamein.<sup>102</sup> On the east coast, the United States and Canada fought the Battle of the Atlantic against the German U-Boat fleet threatening supply deliveries to the United Kingdom.<sup>103</sup> Concurrently, lend-lease shipments to thirty-six nations including the United Kingdom, Russia, China, Canada, Mexico, as well as many in Europe, the Middle East, and South America taxed American logistics.<sup>104</sup> Demand for resources was extremely high and prioritizing these efforts posed a significant challenge for military planners. Each new requirement imposed a cost in manpower, shipping, and escorts that affected the operational reach of the overall war effort.

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<sup>102</sup>Mary H. Williams, *Chronology, 1941-1945* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Army Center of Military History, 1960), 48-52.

<sup>103</sup>National Archives of London, "Atlantic 1939-1945: The Battle of the Atlantic" (April 24, 2008), 3-6.

<sup>104</sup>O. K. Armstrong, "Lend-Lease in War and Peace," *Nation's Business (pre-1986)* 30, no. 8 (1942).

Operational reach was the third planning principle driving the development of the North African campaign. Operational reach is “the distance and duration across which a joint force can successfully employ military capabilities” and is affected by “improving transportation availability and the effectiveness of LOCs [Lines of Communication] and throughput capability.”<sup>105</sup> Stated another way, “for any given campaign or major operation, there is a finite range beyond which predominant elements of the joint force cannot prudently operate or maintain effective operations.”<sup>106</sup> In many ways, operational reach is a logistical math problem. Affecting this problem is the distance between the home base and the ultimate objective, the threat level along that distance, the number of forces required to attain the objective, and the equipment required to sustain that fighting force to the campaign’s conclusion. All planners must solve this problem. While the context may differ, the problem of operational reach is very similar to the problem of getting three men to Mars.<sup>107</sup> Taking the concept of operational reach to the extreme it becomes clear that the resources required for a given operational objective exponentially increase as the distance and threat increase between the home base and the objective. If resources are held constant then the objective must change or more risk has to be accepted. Given a finite amount of resources, planners must allocate those resources based on the priority of all objectives to be achieved in all theaters of operation. If the resources available are not sufficient to achieve all objectives then some objectives must be given up or the scope and scale of certain operations must be reduced in order to provide sufficient resources for the most important objectives.

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<sup>105</sup>U.S. Joint Chiefs of Staff, *JP 5-0 Joint Operation Planning*, III-33.

<sup>106</sup>*Ibid.*, III-34.

<sup>107</sup>John K. Strickland, "Access to Mars: Part 2 A Mars Transport and Logistics System Based on a Fully Re-usable Mars Ferry" (Presented at the 30th International Space Development Conference Huntsville, Alabama, May 18, 2011).  
<http://www.nss.org/settlement/mars/AccessToMars.pdf> (accessed January 31, 2013).

The principle of operational reach was important for the planners of the North African campaign because limited resources provided another friction point between Washington and London and also between American planners in the Pacific and Mediterranean theaters. Eisenhower clearly pointed out this tension in his letter to Marshall on August 9, 1942 stating that “Continuous study of the possibilities has forced us, as is always the case, to seek the best possible compromise between desirable execution of operations on the one hand and definitely limited resources on the other.”<sup>108</sup> Operational reach played a significant role in the second battle of El Alamein where Rommel had overstretched his lines of communication based in Tripoli nearly one thousand miles away.<sup>109</sup> Secondly, U.S. doctrine at the time stressed the importance of lines of communication:

IMPORTANCE OF AN ARMY'S SUPPLY SYSTEM -- In war, even under the best conditions, transport facilities are rarely sufficient to meet all the requirements. Any enemy interference with an army's supply system has far reaching consequences. The larger the force the greater will be the consequences. Past experience indicates that for an army to be driven away from its lines of communication and separated from its base has generally resulted in disaster.<sup>110</sup>

Further exacerbating the tension over operational reach were the competing demands between the planned operations of BOLERO-ROUNDUP-SLEDGEHAMMER and TORCH, and ongoing operations in the Pacific Theater. Three thousand five hundred miles separated New York and Casablanca while seven thousand two hundred miles separated San Francisco from Brisbane (see figure 2). While the distance across the Atlantic was half the distance as the Pacific, ships travelling across the Pacific did not have to contend with a significant German submarine threat

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<sup>108</sup>Eisenhower and Chandler, *The Papers of Dwight David Eisenhower: The War Years I*, 453.

<sup>109</sup>Niderost, "Baptism of Fire: Kasserine Pass, 1943."

<sup>110</sup>Command and General Staff School, *The Principles of Strategy for An Independent Corps or Army in a Theater of Operations*, 18.

that was present in the Atlantic. Finally, given the longer distances in the Pacific, a ship that could carry 100,000 troops across the Atlantic could only carry 40,000 troops across the Pacific and supporting those 40,000 troops (in the Pacific) would require more ships than required to support 100,000 troops in Casablanca.<sup>111</sup> Much of the history written about the North African campaign focuses on the importance “that U.S. ground troops are brought into action against



Figure 2: Shipping distances from the United States to Brisbane and Casablanca

Source: <http://d-maps.com/m/world/centreameriques/centreameriques06.pdf>

the enemy in 1942.”<sup>112</sup> However, during the summer of 1942 United States air and land forces were fighting in the Pacific against the Japanese and United States air forces were bombing

<sup>111</sup>Leighton and Coakley, *Global Logistics and Strategy, 1940-1943*, 390.

<sup>112</sup>Letter Roosevelt to Marshall dated 15 July 1942, “Instructions for London Conference – July, 1942 in Appendix D of Matloff and Snell, *Strategic Planning for Coalition Warfare, 1941-1942*, 384.



German targets in German-occupied France.<sup>113</sup> All of these operations created significant demands on United States war-making resources. These demands as well as the demands for future operations affected Allied operational reach. Three examples illuminate how the principle of operational reach affected how American planners crafted their operational approach for the North African campaign.

Confusion stemming from different interpretations about the decision to launch Operation TORCH is the first example demonstrating how the principle of operational reach affected the development of the North African campaign. Much of the confusion surrounding the availability of resources originated from confusion about Roosevelt's decision to invade North Africa and previous agreements established in Combined Chiefs of Staff memorandum 94 (CCS 94) titled "Operations in 1942/43." In the most basic sense, Marshall believed that Roosevelt's decision to mount TORCH on July 30, 1942 was a decision to plan for the invasion without precluding ROUNDUP in 1943. Under this interpretation, Marshall was compelled to withhold ships and troops for the cross-channel attack while still providing limited resources for TORCH. In doing so, the argument over the objectives of TORCH was exacerbated due to the lack of available resources to present an overwhelming force to ensure Vichy-French capitulation, prevent the closure of the Strait of Gibraltar, and seize Tunis before the Germans. The basis of the confusion comes from the interpretation and primacy of three separate but related decisions: ABC-4/CS-1 "American British Grand Strategy" approved on December 31, 1941 during the Arcadia Conference; Combined Chiefs of Staff memorandum 94 "Operations in 1942/43" dated July 24, 1942 approved during the London Conference; and Roosevelt's decision to mount TORCH on July 30, 1942. ABC-4/CS-1 established the Germany-first strategy, directed that minimum forces be diverted to other theaters at the expense of operations against Germany, and established an

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<sup>113</sup>Williams, *Chronology, 1941-1945*, 48-52.

operational approach for “closing and tightening the ring around Germany.”<sup>114</sup> CCS 94 gave primacy to planning and resources to ROUNDUP, cancelled SLEDGEHAMMER as a scheduled operation but continued its planning and preparation, and established TORCH as the replacement to SLEDGEHAMMER should the Russians appear to be on the brink of collapse by September 15, 1942.<sup>115</sup> Additionally, CCS 94 clearly stated that if TORCH were launched in 1942, ROUNDUP would be impossible in 1943. From a practical standpoint, the impact of CCS 94 was that it added another major operation requiring resources without eliminating other requirements; demand was increased while supply remained constant thus exacerbating the piecemeal of resources across the globe. Roosevelt’s decision for launching TORCH no later than October 30, 1942 is actually a misnomer; at least in the eyes of Marshall. Roosevelt had informed his emissary for the London Conference, Harry Hopkins, that if SLEDGEHAMMER was impossible, he wanted to invade North Africa in 1942 and launch ROUNDUP in 1943.<sup>116</sup> Roosevelt did not understand, or refused to believe, that TORCH and ROUNDUP were mutually exclusive.<sup>117</sup> When Roosevelt communicated his decision to Churchill on July 30, 1942 most believed that it was the final decision.<sup>118</sup> Marshall, however, believed that Roosevelt’s decision

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<sup>114</sup>ABC-4/CS-1 “American-British Grand Strategy” dated December 31, 1941 in Combined Chiefs of Staff, *Proceedings of the American - British Joint Chief of Staff Conferences Held in Washington D.C., on Twelve Occasions Between December 24, 1941 and January 14, 1942*, 252.

<sup>115</sup>CCS 94 “Operations in 1942/43” dated July 24, 1942 in Appendix V of James Ramsay Montagu Butler and J M A Gwyer, *Grand Strategy. Vol.3, Part 2 June 1941-August 1942*, (London: H.M.S.O., 1964), 684-685.

<sup>116</sup>Sherwood, *Roosevelt and Hopkins: An Intimate History*, 602-603. and Mark A. Stoler, *The Politics of the Second Front: American Military Planning and Diplomacy in Coalition Warfare, 1941-1943* (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1977), 56.

<sup>117</sup>Matloff and Snell, *Strategic Planning for Coalition Warfare, 1941-1942*, 282.

<sup>118</sup>*Ibid.*, 283.

was to study TORCH and that a true final decision would not be made until September 15, 1942 in accordance with the agreement established in CCS 94.<sup>119</sup> Beneath the surface, the disagreement was not about TORCH, the disagreement was over grand strategy. Launching TORCH in 1942 ended the possibility of ROUNDUP in 1943 and thus forced American planners to accept the indirect approach of closing and tightening the ring around Germany as opposed to a direct attack on Germany thus forestalling the war for at least another year. Because Marshall and his planners believed that ROUNDUP was still a possibility they were not willing to give primacy to TORCH and the resources required to present overwhelming strength in an operation they believed did little to defeat Germany.<sup>120</sup> Additionally, American planners were reluctant to redirect air forces allocated for BOLERO to the Pacific (to support Guadalcanal) as indicated in CCS 94 because the withdrawal of those forces was only to occur after the decision to launch TORCH and abandon ROUNDUP was made.<sup>121</sup> The effect of the lack of resources limited the operational reach of the proposed plans presented by Eisenhower in August of 1942.

The second example demonstrating how the principle of operational reach affected the development of the North African campaign is illustrated through the discourse over Eisenhower's August 25, 1942 outline plan for TORCH. As discussed in section one, the August 25 plan called for landings in Oran and Algiers however, in order to accomplish what he had been asked to do, Eisenhower needed more resources. In his professional opinion, TORCH required an overwhelming force inside and outside of the Mediterranean to bring to fruition the very assumptions the Combined Chiefs were making about Vichy-French resistance and continued

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<sup>119</sup>Marshall to Eisenhower dated July 30, 1942 in Marshall, Bland and Ritenour, *The Papers of George Catlett Marshall. Vol. 3. "The Right Man for the Job", December 7, 1941-May 31, 1943*, 284.

<sup>120</sup>Matloff and Snell, *Strategic Planning for Coalition Warfare, 1941-1942*, 296.

<sup>121</sup>*Ibid.*, 301.

Spanish non-belligerency. Eisenhower argued that if the Allies wanted control of North Africa badly, they would have to provide the resources for it at the expense of all other operations across the globe. Eisenhower warned the Combined Chiefs that the primacy of TORCH would be required for months regardless of its initial success. Acknowledging the limited resources available, the American Joint Chiefs proposed to modify the initial, intermediate, and ultimate objectives outlined in the August 13, 1942 directive that established the Allied Expeditionary Force with Eisenhower as the commander.<sup>122</sup> In doing so, American planners proposed decreasing the physical range of Eisenhower's ultimate objective rather than providing more forces. Instead of establishing lodgments in Casablanca, Oran, and Algiers; the new initial objective would be "Establishment of mutually supporting lodgments in the Agidir-Marrakech-Casablanca-Rabat-Fez area in French Morocco and in the Oran-Mostaganem-Mascara area in Algeria."<sup>123</sup> Instead of extending operations eastward towards Libya into the rear of the Afrika Korps, the new intermediate objective would be the "rapid exploitation in order to acquire complete control of the area including French Morocco, Spanish Morocco (if the situation requires) and Western Algeria, to facilitate the extension of effective air and ground operations to the eastward."<sup>124</sup> Finally, instead of annihilating Axis forces in Africa and continuing air and sea operations into Europe, the new ultimate objective would be, "combined air, ground and sea operations with a view to insuring complete control by the United Nations of the entire North African area from Rio de Oro to Tunisia inclusive, and to facilitate air operations against the enemy's forces and installations in the Mediterranean Area."<sup>125</sup> This is an excellent example of

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<sup>122</sup>Combined Chiefs of Staff, "Directive for CINC AEF," 1-2.

<sup>123</sup>U.S. Joint Chiefs of Staff, "Proposed New Directive for CINC AEF," 1.

<sup>124</sup>Ibid., 2.

<sup>125</sup>Ibid.

the function of operational reach. While Eisenhower argued for more resources to attain the ultimate objective of the campaign, American planners held the resources constant while reducing the ultimate objective.

The third example demonstrating how the principle of operational reach affected the development of the North African campaign is observed by the shifting of global priorities in order to provide the resources to achieve the ultimate objective of the campaign. Although Roosevelt had stated, in no uncertain terms, that TORCH “should be undertaken at the earliest possible date” he still “could see no reason why the withdrawal of a few troops in 1942 would prevent [ROUNDUP] in 1943.”<sup>126</sup> However, as discussions progressed on the objectives of TORCH it became clear that for the operation to be a success, it would require more resources. Additionally, the failure of the Dieppe raid on August 19, 1942, on the northern coast of France, may have indicated the difficulty for a cross-channel attack with the resources currently allocated to ROUNDUP. By late August and early September of 1942, Roosevelt and Churchill compromised on the operational objectives of TORCH, the scope and purpose of the operation, and the resources required to achieve the ultimate objective. In order to present an overwhelming force for the North African campaign, priorities had to be adjusted. As noted in CCS 94, the decision to launch TORCH effectively cancelled ROUNDUP in 1943 thereby freeing ROUNDUP forces for TORCH.<sup>127</sup> Secondly, the cancellation of northern convoys to Russia would free up shipping and escorts for TORCH.<sup>128</sup> Third, the delay of air forces and shipping to the Pacific would free up assets for TORCH. Fourth, combat-loading troop transports were made available

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<sup>126</sup>Roosevelt says “BOLERO” when he meant “ROUNDUP.” Matloff and Snell, *Strategic Planning for Coalition Warfare, 1941-1942*, 282.

<sup>127</sup>Butler and Gwyer, *Grand Strategy. Vol.3, Part 2 June 1941-August 1942*, 684-685.

<sup>128</sup>Stoler, *The Politics of the Second Front: American Military Planning and Diplomacy in Coalition Warfare, 1941-1943*, 65.

for TORCH at the expense of troop shipments to the UK.<sup>129</sup> Fifth, the *Queen Mary* and *Queen Elizabeth* would transport troops to the United Kingdom unescorted, freeing up escort vessels for the invasion of North Africa.<sup>130</sup> Finally, complete re-prioritization of all Allied shipping was required so that simultaneous landings could be launched at Casablanca, Oran, and Algiers. The new priorities were as follows:

1. TORCH – (To take precedence over other shipping in the Atlantic while being mounted), Middle East, Pacific Ocean, Russian Supplies shipped by way of the southern route.

2. U.S. Army Air Forces to the U.K. and China.

3. Relief of Iceland.

4. BOLERO

5. India and China

NOTE. – If supplies are to be sent to Russia via the northern route, priority 6 is recommended.<sup>131</sup>

The compromises made by Roosevelt and Churchill increased the available forces required to extend Allied operational reach to achieve the ultimate objective of the North African campaign.

Operational reach is affected by the objective to be attained and the resources available to achieve the objective. During the discussions of August 1942, Marshall held back resources for ROUNDUP, which effectively limited the scope of TORCH. When Eisenhower presented his second outline plan for TORCH on August 25, 1942 he was aware that he did not have the resources required to attain the ultimate campaign objective of complete control of North Africa. Therefore, he made his argument for additional resources to extend his operational reach and

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<sup>129</sup>Matloff and Snell, *Strategic Planning for Coalition Warfare, 1941-1942*, 314.

<sup>130</sup>*Ibid.*, 309.

<sup>131</sup>*Ibid.*

provide a greater chance of success to the mission he was given. American planners were unwilling to provide additional resources for the operation and suggested changing the ultimate objective. By limiting the objective, the mission could be accomplished with the resources available at the time. However, changing the ultimate objective was unacceptable. By late August, it was clear that if the ultimate objective was not changed, more resources were required. Marshall's attempts to keep ROUNDUP alive were unsupportable. No amount of operational art or creativity could counter the reality on the ground. By opening the door to TORCH, the door to ROUNDUP closed. Therefore, by changing priorities within the overall global Allied strategy, enough troops, aircraft, and shipping were made available to give the campaign a reasonable chance of success.

## CONCLUSION

The successful amphibious landings at Casablanca, Oran, and Algiers coupled with the Clark-Darlan agreement triggered the capitulation of French forces. Those developments ensured the Spanish did not close the Strait of Gibraltar thus avoiding the primary American undesired effect of the campaign. However, the Allies had nearly 500 miles to cover in order to get to Tunis before the Germans could reinforce Rommel. Unfortunately, the Allies lost the race. Hitler was able to reinforce Rommel by building a second army on the continent through the short line of communication separating Tunisia and Italy. Instead of a four-week campaign, as described by Churchill, the Allies fought for three months to get to the Algeria-Tunisia border. The tipping point of the campaign was at Kasserine. Although the battle of Kasserine Pass went down in history as an Allied tactical defeat, the experience gained in the battle and the campaign laid the foundation for the eventual invasions of Sicily, Italy, and France.

The six weeks of deliberations known as the "transatlantic essay contest" demonstrated the cognitive tensions between two coalition partners and their respective services regarding the

operational goals for the North African campaign. Achieving the ultimate objective of the campaign was a balancing act between selecting objectives within the operational reach of the forces available while mitigating undesired effects. Each nation and service proposed different methods for balancing the conflicting views in order to achieve the strategic outcomes set forth in the August 13, 1942 directive to the Allied Expeditionary Force Commander in Chief. In the end it took the President of the United States and the Prime Minister of the United Kingdom to break the impasse and provide the resources necessary to provide the mission a reasonable chance of success.

Although the North African campaign was fought seventy years ago, the planning principles that drove its development are just as relevant today as they were in 1942. While Joint Publication 5-0, *Joint Operation Planning*, provides solid descriptions of each element of operational design, it lacks a clear method for planners to deal with situations when some of the elements come into conflict with one another. The bottom line is that there is no formulaic method or checklist to achieving strategic objectives through the use of military force; this is the realm of operational art. Planners must use the tools provided in doctrine, such as the elements of operational design, to craft an approach to achieve the desired strategic endstate. Making that statement is easy but the devil is in the details. Developing a campaign requires planners to balance what has been asked of them with what is available to accomplish the mission. The problem becomes more complex when more than one nation is involved because politics and national interests can muddle the focus and direction of the campaign. Additionally, with each friendly action there will be an enemy reaction that potentially creates undesired effects that must also be dealt with. All of these factors, and many others, must be weighed against, and in conjunction with, one another to strike the right balance between the ultimate objective to be gained, the resources available at the time, and the effects that each decision will have on the operational environment. Nothing should be considered in isolation.



Marshall's reluctance to accept the strategic approach laid out in CCS 94 also had an effect on the development of the North African campaign. Marshall was well aware that launching TORCH in 1942 effectively cancelled ROUNDUP in 1943. TORCH and ROUNDUP represented the two distinct strategic approaches to the war. TORCH represented the indirect approach espoused by the British to attack the soft underbelly of the Axis and close and tighten the ring around Germany before delivering the decisive blow. ROUNDUP represented the American's direct approach to the war by striking at the heart of Germany as quickly as possible. By agreeing to TORCH, Marshall was essentially acquiescing his philosophical position on the conduct of the war. His reluctance to forgo ROUNDUP was the main source of friction which lead to the "transatlantic essay contest." The professional disagreement that resulted in the "transatlantic essay contest" was not an anomaly. These types of staff disagreements occur on an almost daily basis. The key lesson for today's planners is that they must be aware of the source of the disagreements and work through them in a professional manner by providing commanders with the best advice possible and highlighting the points of contention. More often than not, these disagreements will be settled at the command level, as was the case in the summer of 1942.

The current situation in Mali provides a modern application of the three principles of objectives, avoiding undesired effects, and operational reach. Today (February 2013), not far from the battlegrounds of the North African campaign, the French have intervened in Mali in order to assist the ousted Malian government regain control of the northern portion of the country and protect French interests in the region.<sup>132</sup> Objectives and operational reach clearly influence the French approach. Islamist forces controlling the northern half of Mali seized the town of Konna near the de facto border between them and the Malian government. This was an

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<sup>132</sup>Susanna Wing, "Making Sense of Mali," *Foreign Affairs* (2013).  
<http://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/138767/susanna-wing/making-sense-of-mali?page=show>  
(accessed February 5, 2013).

intermediate objective towards seizing the airfield at Sévaré. The airfield at Sévaré is decisive terrain for future operations in northern Mali.<sup>133</sup> With the Islamists on the brink of capturing Sévaré and the Malian Army unable to prevent the penetration at Konna, the French were forced to respond before the airfield fell into enemy hands. Sévaré is the operational equivalent of Tunis in 1942. The loss of the Sévaré airfield would have forced any future intervention to take the airfield by force or use the airport at Bamako 300 miles to the southwest. The French ground intervention was likely an undesired effect from the Islamist perspective. An intervention force was not expected to deploy for months and the Islamists may have thought that a quick seizure of Sévaré would further delay outside intervention. Since the ground intervention began on January 11, 2013 French and Malian forces have pushed back the Islamists as far as Timbuktu. Key objectives during the campaign have been airfields which provide the French with a base of operations to extend their operational reach deeper into northern Mali. In many ways, these examples parallel the objectives of the North African campaign of 1942 where ports and airfields were the key operational objectives to achieving the endstate of the campaign. The French are in Mali at the request of the ousted Malian government and therefore do not have to be as concerned with strong resistance from the local Malian population; in contrast the Allies would have preferred to go into North Africa as invited liberators. However, preventing undesired effects likely impacts the French operational approach. The French will have to contend with the perception that their intervention is a post-colonial endeavor; the request for assistance provides cover for this narrative. The French likely will have strict rules of engagement to prevent collateral damage and maintain the support of the Malian people. Finally, if the French are successful they must be mindful of where they drive the insurgents. If those insurgents are driven

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<sup>133</sup>Adam Nossiter and Eric Schmitt, "French Troops Help Mali Halt An Islamist Advance," *The New York Times* (2013).

into Niger, it could have significant economic and strategic impacts to France because Niger provides oil and uranium to France's energy industry.<sup>134</sup>

Comparing the North African campaign of 1942 and the French intervention in Mali in 2013 demonstrates that while conflicts, leaders, and locations differ, our doctrinal planning principles are just as relevant today as they were in 1942. Applying these principles to the past or to the future enables planners to think through the complex and interwoven issues surrounding and influencing a conflict to enable creative solutions to very human problems.

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<sup>134</sup>Wing, "Making Sense of Mali."

## APPENDIX A: SERIAL NUMBERS AND CODE WORDS

### Serial Numbers

ABC-4/CS-1	United States serial number of the memorandum from the American and British Chiefs of Staff entitled “American-British Strategy” that established the Germany-first strategy for the war by closing and tightening the ring around Germany. Approved on December 31, 1941 during the ARCADIA conference in Washington, DC.
CCS 94	United States serial number for Combined Chiefs of Staff Memorandum 94 titled “Operations in 1942/43” approved on July 24, 1942 during the London Conference of the Combined Chiefs of Staff.

### Code Words

ARCADIA	Conference of the American and British Joint Chiefs held in Washington, DC from December 24, 1941 to January 14, 1942.
BARBAROSSA	German invasion of Russia in 1941.
BOLERO	Build up of United States forces in the United Kingdom in preparation for a cross-channel attack into Europe (known as ROUNDUP).
CATAPULT	British attack on the French naval fleet in July 1940 to prevent the French Navy from falling into German hands.
DYNAMO	The evacuation of British and French forces from Dunkirk, France to the United Kingdom from May 27, 1940 to June 4, 1940.
GYMNAST	Plan for the British invasion of North Africa. Later SUPER-GYMNAST. Later TORCH.
ROUNDUP	Concept of a combined American and British cross-channel attack into France in 1943.
SLEDGEHAMMER	Combined American and British cross-channel attack into western France in 1942 to prevent the imminent capitulation of Russia. This was a branch plan to BOLERO.
SUPER-GYMNAST	Concept of a combined American and British invasion of North Africa.
TORCH	The combined American and British invasion of North Africa that began on November 8, 1942. Churchill renamed SUPER-GYMNAST to TORCH once Roosevelt made the decision.

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